A Trip to historic St Albert, /

Yesterday we had a very interesting experience, Robert E Gard, the chap that is at the university of Alberta, from the Rockfeller foundation, studying Alberta Folk Lore, invited me to go on a little trip with him. It was to St Albert, about 11 miles from Edmonton. We left about one o'clock Thursday afternoon. It's just a short trip from here, he has a ~~very~~ nice car and that made the trip seem even shorter. About a mile outside of this hamlet, the topography of the country takes a definite turn I might even add, a better turn. Suddenly you come on a trun in the road and seem to see the school etc. of St Albert immeadiately in front of you. But before we arrive finally, we had gone down a long hill, crossed over what the are pleased to call a river, drove along the valley for a few blocks then turned up a narrow winding road through a gate that had on an arch overhead carrying the letters, welcome to Mount St Albert. The road ran twisting and turning up to the top of the valley ridge. Just before we turned into the seminary grounds themselves, a statute drew our attention, it was of Father Lacombe, a famous catholic missionery and Peacemaker ~~with the indians~~. We drew up under the shade of some trees and preceded to wander around.

First I'd better tell you the lay out of the place. Taking Father Lacombe's statue as the beginning, we see to the left, about five hundred feet away, that would be to the west, a large red brick building with white stone trim, four stories high and in the shape of a large tee, Farther west again, the paly grounds and pasture lands. Just a shade to th west of the statue and 6 or seven hundred feet back to the north is a small red brick building, white stone trim and small old fashioned windows. directly beside that is a large church, cathedral really. Modeled after a famous cathedral in spain, To the East of the cathedral 2 t0 3 hundred feet is another red stone building of three stories, this one is the oldest. Tin roof, many chimneys, and strange hooks in the roof near the peaks . I might add that the roofs are steep North of this building used to be the old school and black smith shop. and at the present time the cemetery. To the west and behind the

cathedral, a little distance, matter of quarter mile are the barns stock etc, and the farm, which the pupils work.

Now you have a rough idea of the layout, I811 continue with the story.

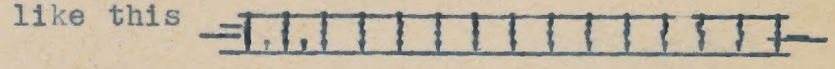
We got out of the car and went west on the sidewalk past the cathedral and stopped at the litte Red brick place with the small windows. And was I surprized, actually this building is just a shell over another building, acting in the capacity of a cardboard box. Because inside it was a litte church. This was Father Lacombe's first church, built around 1868. All hand hewn logs, the cracks stuffed with some sort of white clay, or mayhaps it wa:n't white clay, but the color had been changed from the original by Whitwash. There was room enough on the outside of the inside church to make a hall about three feet wide. This hall and church are the museum.

W came out of the museum, to look for someone who might be able to tell us something of the history of the place. While we were standing around, just looking, three priests came out of the large tee shape building and came toward us. Bob immeadiately engaged them in conversation and one took over, stating that he would be very pleased to assist us, and as he had known Father Lacombe and many of the others would be able to tell us some of the history, I might add that Prof Gard nabbed him forth with and to wit, just what he wanted..
This was Father Louis Simard, he has been there since 1909. And seemed like a very nice chap, which he was.

Grabbing Bob Gard's arm, and I do mean grab, he said,"come with me I show you things". Starting off, were we had first gone in the museum he went down the left side pointing out things of interest, and explaining their histories. On the outside wall is a case with glass doors, inside are numerous articles, one of which is a small case with a glass front and two charred pieces of bone, it seems these are all that was left of two missionaries who were killed and burned in the frog lake massacre. The Frog Lake do was by the Plain Crees lead by Big Bear, and took place

1885
in 1877. These two missioneries were Fathers Faford and Marchand, they were burned in their church after having been shot by the Crees. The story is told, that after the crees left, friendly indians picked up the priests and carried them to the church. When they had put them down one of the pictures is supposed to have taken on an unholy fierce look and glowed with a strange light. This stampeded the crew and they ran out and set fire to the edifice. These were the remains. Also in the case was a bundle of clothing consisting of it looked like, a pair of socks and the crucifix and belt of a priest, this was all that remained of a missionery caught by wolves many years ago. On the wall was a stick about twenty inches long covered with white rawhide which was about thirty six inches long in the loose end of the rawhide, the indians placed a stone about three quarter as large as a baseball, this was endearingly called a war club, and seems to me to be the forerunner of what we know now as the billy. Farther down the wall was a picture frame, inclosing two birch bark scrolls, addressed to Father Lacombe on his diamond jubilee. Around the back we came upon a real birch bark canoe, the seams seemed to be sealed with a sort of black gum, I don't think it was pich as they didn't have it in those days. Then as we followed round the outside of the old log church, many more things were pointed out, among them, a hand made plough share. It seems that the Hudson's Bay Co were reluctant, to put it mildly, to let settlers come into Alberta, and so wouldn't sell farm equipment, saying that the [illegible] land in that part of the country was not suited to farming. Believing otherwise this father proved his point by making a plow share and putting in a crop. As Father Simard said the wheat grown that year was taller than he was. By the by he is six two. He also repeated that story of the rifles, piling the fur the height of the rifle was the price to be paid, and the rifle were made as long as possible, by the Bay. Gentlemen Adventurers out of England. Every tool to work the land was made by this father, that is at first, they even made a presser for hosts, along with shovels

picks and even nails. The attack of civilization thus was sta ted with out the aid of the Bay and other Companies. I don't know whether this is the same blacksmith the story is told about, but for what it's worth here it is . This blacksmiths fame as a strong man had travelled all over the country of the Northwest, one day a stranger came into the shop, remember this was a priest, and said, could you tell me were the strong blacksmith stays". The father picked up the anvil and pointed to a distant building saying, "He lives there".

In another of the glass fronted cases was a peculiar instrument about nine inches wide by twelve ~~high~~ long, just the size to take an ordinary piece of writing paper. Down the side of this were evenly spaced notches, both sides matching. Then there was a bar which fitted across this board something like this  It seems that one of the Fathers by name Le Corre, was blinded ~~by~~ by snow and stayed pemanently that way, and this was his means of writing which he had figured out himself. Father Simard said that he used the board for years and was quite proficient with it, in it now is the last letter he wrote, in French of course. This same Father after he was blind wrote all the people he knew for donations and with what came in bought a solid gold door for the Tabernacle of the Cathedral.

In this case too are the two rifles that the Fathers Faford and Marchand were killed with at Frog Lake.

From the museum we walked ~~E~~ast a few steps to the cathedral, and up the steps into the church proper. It is a very lovely place, clean as a whip, pews of solid oak and oak flooring. We walked up to the altar rail and through. The carpet from the rail to the altar was of homespun made on the premises by indians. Candlesticks were about ~~xirk~~ thirty six inches high and were given to the church by Napoleon the third of France, when Bishop Gardin was visiting there. Altar cloths are all hand worked & marvelous patterns of lace. There too is a statue ~~xixux~~ of

Saint Marguerite also given to the Bishop by someone in France a famous writer, I think. We went out the sanctuary dooronto the back porch so to speak, and what a view fromthere. Looking due East the ground slops away and down for about a mile then gradually starts back up. On the far side of the valley farmers are planting thier crops which are in various states of growths and greens, and the whole shaded it seemed by trees, poplars and pines.the poplars rustling thier leaves with a sound similiar to taffeta skirts of the old days. The pines tall green and majestic. Coming down off the steps we made for the tombs which are just under the sanctuary, in the basement we might say, and we will. There are three tombs here, placed together, the centre one the largest the two others exactly like each other. the two smaller ones are Fathers Lacombe and Le Douc both missioneries to the Crees Blackfeet and metis. Bosom chums, partners in honor. The Larger is that of Bishop Gardin the founder of the Archdiocese

In this place is also an alter about fifteen feet high by the same wide and about four feet deep, flanked at each end by statues of angels, these are on pedestals, but would be larger than real life The interesting thing about it is though, that it is all carved by pen knife, from local poplar. The work on the angels is excelent, but no better than the altar. Rather an amazing thing to think that the lowly polar could be made into so nice a thing, and one that I would have said was impossible.

From here we came back out to the sunlight, stopped and admired the view and then walked back to the cemetary which lay north to the north. Walking way down to the back we came upon the part laid aside for the oblate fathers, there are quite a number of graves there now but our guide said that when he arrived there were just about eight or ten, including the headstone of the massacered fathers, Faford and Marchand, their headstones were a pair, what I means is joining, and were the only two of that nature in the plots. Off to one side and looking very lonely, was a little space for the nuns who had passed

away, while posted there. I might say that there were quite a number too.

Walking back from the place of the ghouls we turned and went East in front of the cathedral and the museum and over to the home of the Grey Nuns, Indians and Old Folks. This is also a school. Thursday was a holiday and the Indian children were in theplayground hitting a baseball around, in general having fun. Our Padre guide rang the bell and we were admitted by one of the sisters. Introductions were made but you know me// and my memory for names, so we'll let that pass.
This is the large building shaped like a tee, that I spoke of earlier and contains, school rooms, old folks, and indians. There is a fair size auditorium at the one end. I might add right here that, this, or a portion of this building was once the Bishopd palace, but the nuns were being overrun with people in their little building across the way and they swapped over. In this aud is a screen painted by one of the fathers in 1875, depicting St Albert as it was then. It's on canvass and in oils, 'smatter of fact the work is not bad either.
They have a large chapel in this building, and around the sides there at one time ran a sort of balcony. This has been all closed in now. So our guide took us up to see the one time balcony. Now they as I say have enclosed it all and made little rooms around, each have a window and I might add that's about all. These are for the aged sisters//They have windows of frosted glass on the wall that faces into the chapel. at each of these window there will be a kneeling stool and chair. When the older sisters want to pray or go to church, all they do is raise t the window in the hall just outside thier room and they are in church. Not bad eh!

Back now to the priests home straight east of the building we just left, this is the one with the high roof, chimneyes and hooks on the peaks. It's a very old building, Father Simard took us in just to show us how old ir was. Upstairs the walls are of wood all hand hewn and planed, you can still see the marks of the planes. They also have a chapel

Naturally, but the thing about this is that though it is small it has a very high roof all made with the same painstaking and ardourous labor methods. This altar too has been carved out of native polar by the fathers, a long time ago I suppose, anyway before my day. It is about twenty five feet high by fifteen feet wide, quite a size to work with a penknife.

This is about all we saw of the place and quite enpugh I should say they were very obliging and helpfull. An invitation has been extended to us to go out and see a play put on by the Indian boys and girls next Sunday.

Father Lacombe is the chap that Bob wanted to find out about, he has some of his history, but wanted the personal touch. He was a rare figure of a man, called the Peacemaker by the Indians, and was their friend. If it hadn't been for him it would have been a great number of years before the rail line would have gone through, and therfore a considerable time before this country would have been settled, except for his efforts. He also was a great friend of Donald Smith's , Lord Strathcona to you, and there is a picture of them hanging in the museum, talking together, I suppose of all the things to come. The story is told of the effort made to get a gold spike to drive in the rail as the last one, and Lord Strathcona said, "Of steel it was made, steel we will finish with". The same chap when he was being honored at a famous university down east, stood up for his speech of thanks, and went on to say,"I thank you etc, I would like to donate to the University the sum of fifty thousand dollars". Wild cheers and stamping Then he sat down. Cheers and stamping died down. Then he stood up again,"My wife would like to donate fifty thousand dollars". More cheers and stamping. Whereupon he sat down for a few moments, suddenly stepping up to the platform again and said,"My son says he wishes to also give fifty thousand dollars". Whereupon the roof blew off.
When the railway was going through the mountains, the indians were

causing a good deal of trouble, one of the men said he thought they ~~xx~~ should stop for awhile, till things were more settled. Strathcona said "No sir, we stand steadfast". The indians called the town after that word steadfast, giving it the indian meaning of the word which is, Craigellachie.

It seems that when they were putting the railway thru ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ the men hung down from the top of the hills and mountains and carved the right of way out of the sides of the rocky slopes.

I neglected to say that in the ~~xxxxxxx~~ graveyard there is a brother buried it seems that he was the one that helped build the parliament buildings in Ottowa, also he constructed the church at St Albert. His name, just Brother Bowes.

.....

So much